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BOOK REVIEWS

Contributo Psicologici del Laboratorio di Psicologia Sperimentale della R. Università di Roma. By S. DE SANCTIS and others. Vol. I, 1910-1911. Presso il Laboratorio di Psicologia, Roma, 1912.

This is a new annual established by Professor De Sanctis, Director of the Psychological Laboratory of the University of Rome, for the purpose of publishing in collected form, the results of investigations undertaken in his laboratory. This first volume contains twenty-three papers, most of which have previously appeared in psychological journals. Not all the articles included are laboratory studies, though all deal with some topic connected with experimental psychology. Ten of the papers are by Professor De Sanctis and discuss the following subjects. "Methods of modern psychology," "External manifestations of thought" (this is a discussion of various theories and not an original laboratory investigation); "Experimental psychology and pedagogy;" several papers treating of problems connected with abnormal children, one of which is a series of mental tests, and "A new method for the study of mental work." This last consists of the use of a series of words read rapidly by the subject, and a later presentation of the words in an incomplete form, the subject being required to complete them. The difference in time between the two series is taken as a measure of the work performed.

Other contributions are as follows: "An experimental critique of the doctrine of tactile points" by Emilia Barucci; "Simple reaction time and predisposition (Einstellung) of the attention" by Isabella Grassi (translated and published in German); "An experimental introduction to the study of types of mental work" by Maria Maccagno; "Researches on the attention, memory and intelligence of children from nine to fifteen years" by Alighiero Micci; "Experimental psychological investigations on very intelligent children" by Alda Jeronutti; "A study of the dreams of children of three years" by S. Doglia and F. Banchiere, and "A contribution to the knowledge of psychic deafness." This last is a study of an individual case under observation for a period of four years.

THEODATE L. SMITH.

Reaction Time to Retinal Stimulation, with special reference to the time lost in conduction through nerve centers. By A. T. POFFEN-BERGER, Jr. Ph. D. Arch. of Psychol., No. 23. (Columbia Cont. to Phil. and Psychol. Vol. XXI, No. 1.) New York, 1912. iii + 73 pp.

An effort has been made in this study, by means of reaction-time, to discover the time required for nervous conduction to pass over a single synapse between two neurones. The author reviews the literature on nerve conduction and shows that the synapse has come to be considered the critical point of attack for the study of differences in

reaction-time for different parts of the body. In this review of the literature, the criticisms of method are pointed out in every study, one of the chief criticisms being that the two paths chosen have not been directly comparable. The author obviates this difficulty by his choice of conduction pathways. A visual stimulus makes use of the fact that stimulation of the right side of both retinas goes to the right cuneus; while stimuli falling on the left side of either retina go to the left cuneus. Thus a direct pathway may be obtained from the cuneus on one side with the motor area on the same side and a reaction with the opposite hand; and an indirect pathway is obtained if the subject reacts with the hand on the same side as the cuneus stimulated. The only difference between the direct and the indirect pathways would be a commissural cell in the brain or cord and thus the introduction of another synapse. The apparatus consisted of a Froeberg exposure wheel connected with a Hipp chronoscope. The fixation was ingeniously obtained by introducing a modified perimeter into the experimental arrangement. On the basis of 10,000 reactions, obtained with various angles of peripheral vision, the author concludes that a very definite time is required for the passing of nervous excitation over a synapse, since the reaction-times for the indirect pathways are uniformly greater than those for direct pathways. Certain objections were raised by the author; their influence was ascertained by means of test experiments, and on this basis they were either allowed for or rejected.

One is impressed by the fact that this study shows great care and ingenuity of experimental arrangement; one can not but feel, however, that it is based on a rather uncertain foundation of anatomical and physiological hypothesis. However, if these hypotheses are valid,—and this very study may give another indication that they are,—the author has made a positive contribution to psychological knowledge.

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SAMUEL W. FERNBERGER.

Influence and Adaptability. An Experimental study of their relation, with special reference to individual differences. By ARTHUR JEROME CULLER, Ph. D. Arch. of Psychol., No. 24. (Columbia Cont. to Phil. and Psychol. Vol. XXI, No. 2.) New York, 1912. v + 80 pp.

As the title indicates, this study deals with individual differences in the general field of interference between two conflicting associations, and with the adaptability of the subject by means of which the reactions to both become automatic. Interference may be of two types: 1. When one association is well established before another is introduced into consciousness; and 2. when two mutually opposing associations are alternated. Several variations of experimental arrangement were employed in order that both types of interference might be investigated; and as the study was primarily one of individual differences a large number of subjects were used.

In one form of experiment the subject associated certain fingers with the pressing of certain typewriter keys; and after this habit was well established, he changed the relation of keys and fingers. In another form of experimentation, he reacted with right and left hand to stimuli of different colors, the time being recorded by means of a Forbes chronoscope. These, however, seem to be considered by the author as preliminary experiments and not of the value of his later work. The latter consisted in a variation of the Bergstrom